

THE SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT



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November 2012

Matches made through teamwork

"I work with good people and get along with everyone," says E'Than Jenkins, former SCVRD client. "I love my job."

Jenkins is a perfect fit for the Parris Island Commissary where he works as a produce clerk.

Unsure of his direction, Jenkins came to SCVRD as a high school student in September of 2009. He had experienced many challenges, had never worked, and was uncertain about his career decisions. In the two years that followed, Jenkins learned to make significant life decisions through guidance and preparation by the Beaufort VR staff.



E'Than Jenkins, produce clerk at Parris Island Commissary.

"He was shy and reserved, but really wanted to work," recalls John Gallagher, Jenkins' counselor. "He was just unsure of what he could do."

Jenkins began discovering strategies and establishing goals that he felt would help him achieve success. He started going to bed earlier, eating healthier and learning the importance of developing good interpersonal skills that are essential on a job.

After graduating from high school, Jenkins was looking forward to new opportunities. "He couldn't wait to finish high school and move on to something else," says Christine Whiteleather, Transition Assessment Specialist.

At that time Jenkins had no idea that VR staff also worked in the community building business relationships to better serve clients like him.

"We had a tremendous opportunity to help fill the needs of the Parris Island Marine Corps Commissary," explains Gregg Gilbert, Beaufort Area Office Supervisor. Gilbert had learned of an initiative by the Department of Defense, Defense Commissary Agency in Virginia to have 2% of their workforce consist of people with severe disabilities.

When Gilbert presented this opportunity to the Beaufort Area Office, Jenkins immediately came to mind as the perfect candidate. VR staff started a plan of action.

Jenkins was thrilled as he prepared for his first employment opportunity as a cashier at the Parris Island Commissary. Gallagher helped him understand the employer's expectations and the importance of being on time for the interview.

But then, during a mock interview and role play exercise conducted by Job Coach Heather Steele, Jenkins discovered he was uncomfortable with counting change.

"E'Than wasn't one to give up, but I could just tell he wasn't comfortable with the task," says Steele. Fortunately, the cashier position was not the only option at the Commissary. "E'Than and I agreed the opening for produce clerk would be a much better fit for him."



With Jenkins feeling less apprehensive and more confident about his ability



to succeed, he did fantastic in the interview, and was hired in October 2011.

Assessing the work environment, Tom Jackman, Rehabilitation Engineer, determined Jenkins needed only minor accommodations. Jenkins was thrilled to discover that he could easily accomplish his tasks and become more independent by using a simple grabber, allowing

...

him to reach and place produce higher on the display counters.

"E'Than is not only meeting expectations, but he fits in so well," says Cynthia Six, Commissary Director.

"E'Than's former teachers have commented to me that he is no longer that quiet kid that keeps to himself," she continues. "When they see him in the produce department, he goes out of his way to say hello and always has a big smile on his face."

And, "his mom says he just won't stop talking about his job—he talks about it all the time," she adds.

Jenkins has also been asked to serve as the coach of the employee basketball team, which came in second place in their league this year.

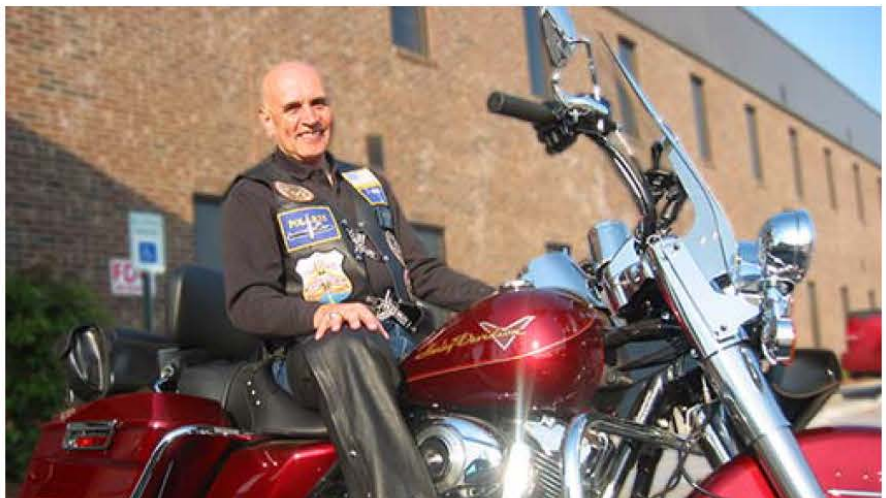
Thanks to a real team effort, Jenkins has not only found employment success, he has found a place to thrive.



Jenkins coaches the employee basketball team.

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Poke me with a fork, I'm done!





People come and go, especially in state government, but few do so as colorfully as the Director of the SC Disability Determination Services (DDS), who is set to retire at the end of November—Mr. Tom Paige.

While his work accomplishments are many, it is likely that it is his “other” contributions that will keep folks talking for some time to come. He’s been likened to “Mr. Monopoly” on more than one occasion, and one might even suspect he has a monocle in his pocket, but no! What’s that? A pair of dice! Well, one never knows when dice will come in handy. And just in case he leaves those at home, he has a spare pair—fuzzy ones—hanging from the rear view mirror of his cherry red Thunderbird (only because they’d blow around too much if they were affixed to the mirror of his motorcycle). Yes, on sunny days this director drives a motorcycle to work, dressed for the part in chaps. Black leather ones, of course.

In addition to keeping DDS staff entertained with his wit and wardrobe, Tom has generously shared his culinary talents. Employees know they’re in for a treat when he’s wandering the halls in chef’s toque with his trusty waffle iron, ready to whip up his famous walnut waffles.

Whether wielding a spatula or conducting a meeting, Tom is always ready with a pun or a joke, turning mere briefings into events. Who among his staff doesn’t recall extending two fists and swaying while joining him in a chorus of “Whoomp! There it is!” in response to some recently met goal?

Puns, penguin jokes and tuxes aside, it’s worth putting his career in some kind of perspective.



After retiring from the Navy, Tom joined the staff of SCVRD in 1997. Over the next six years he served as the Administrator of the Information Technology Training Program, Special Projects Manager in Information Technology (IT) and IT Director before being named the DDS Director in 2003. His expertise in information technology has been instrumental in aiding DDS in providing accurate and timely decisions to the state’s citizens with disabilities.

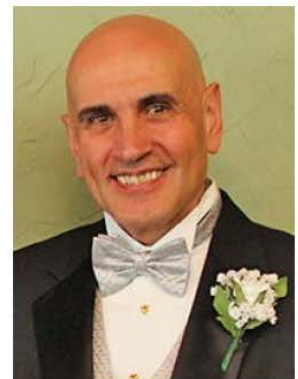
Providing the highest level of services to claimants cannot occur without attention to quality, and Tom is a strong proponent of the view that productivity cannot occur at the expense of quality. All DDS staff know his mantra, “If you adjudicate 100 claims and 99 are returned with an error, you have really only adjudicated one claim.”

Another of his colorful examples involves a three-legged stool, with one leg representing production, the second quality and the third customer service. If any one leg is cut off, the stool cannot stand.

His commitment to people with disabilities is also evident in his involvement in Kaps for Kids, an organization funded by submarine veterans, which provides children receiving chemotherapy with caps to protect them from the common side-effect of hair loss.

Tom, the DDS and general program won’t be the same without you. So, as we say thank you and watch you ride into the sunset of your well-deserved retirement, we have just one thing to ask—“any questions? Going once.... Questions going twice.... Three times....

Poke him with a fork—he’s done!”



Material contributed by DDS staff

Around the state

Bryant Center recognized for Program Integrity

Congratulations to the Bryant Center in Lyman for having the highest overall Program Integrity score for Fiscal Year 2012.



Jennie Thomas (left), Area Administrator for Bryant Center, receives the annual recognition from Agency Board Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roizanne Breland and Agency Board Chairman Derie Lowder Sr.

Open Houses and Disability Mentoring Days

VR offices around the state celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness (NDEA) Month with open houses and Disability Mentoring Days.

Rock Hill



Participating employers included Wal-Mart, Filtration Group, Alvac, Aerotek, Bi-Lo, and Econo Lodge.

Camden

Camden's open house included several new employer contacts and the possibility of 3 hires and 2 new contracts for the training center.

Student participants in Rock Hill's DMD.





DMD students at Palmetto Paint and Body (left) and First Baptist Kindergarten (right).

Charleston



More than 40 people attended Charleston's open house. Among the attendees were Rep. David Mack and retired Rep. Floyd Breeland. Tours of the training center were provided and they had a short program recognizing Jeffrey Nolan, a SWAT client who is now an employee of Floyd Brace. Jeffrey has a below the knee amputation, due to a construction accident in 2006. Jeffrey competes in triathlons and recently completed his first Half Ironman. He spoke about his experience with SCVR and his path to successful employment. Business partners Zman Fishing Products and Boatlife Industries were recognized.

Berkeley-Dorchester



Left, Mayor William Peagler, Moncks Corner, reads the Proclamation declaring October Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Right, Joey Peters accepts the Business Partner Award for Wal-Mart of Moncks Corner.



Left, Darlene Warso signs her acceptance remarks after receiving the SC Vocational Rehabilitation Client Achievement Award for the Berkeley-Dorchester Area Office.

Right, (left to right) Rep. Joe Jefferson, Rep. Joe Daning, and Mayor William Peagler attend the Berkeley-Dorchester Open House. Not pictured, but also attending were Rep Jenny Horne and Berkeley County Supervisor Dan Davis.



Mayor Billy Keyserling (right) presents the City of Beaufort proclamation for National Disability Employment Awareness Month to SCVRD staff members (from left) Joycesteven Pringle, Heather Steele, Gregory Gilbert (Beaufort Area Supervisor).

Oconee-Pickens



Staff and student at Oconee-Pickens Open House/DMD.

Spartanburg





VR clients "dress for success" at the Job Fair held at the Spartanburg Work Training Center. One participating agency expressed interest in hiring six clients.

The Bryant Center



Left, More than 100 people attended Open House at the Bryant Center.



Right, Speaker Michael White receives a plaque of recognition from Janice Miller, VR Area Client Services Manager.

DDS celebrates FY12 accomplishments

South Carolina DDS was one of only two DDS's in the Atlanta Region to meet all FY12 workload goals, which include meeting budgeted workloads in processing of initial claims, requests for reconsideration and continuing disability reviews. SCDDS met these goals despite having the second highest disability examiner attrition rate in the nation, 14.8%, and with no new examiner hires during the last two years.

All three SCDDS regional offices celebrated the accomplishments of FY12. The Charleston office held a New Year's party, with BBQ and sides provided by the Social Committee and desserts supplied by staff members.

The Columbia office DDS Council hosted an End of the Year Luau complete with Jimmy Buffett music, non-alcoholic Margaritas, and the most wonderful Mexican themed dips you could imagine.

The Greenville DDS office staff enjoyed a good ol' fashioned picnic at nearby McPherson park of BBQ pork/chicken, baked beans, slaw, chips, and dessert. Staffers "soaked up" the "rays and the praise" for a job well done this past year.

The Columbia Regional Office TOSS team received the SSA Regional Commissioner's Exceptional Customer Service team award.

FY2011 DDS Honor Awards

Dr. George Keller III (Ted), Lead Medical Consultant in the Charleston Regional Office, received the SSA Commissioner's Citation in recognition of outstanding leadership and program excellence for the state of South Carolina.

Dr. Xanthia Harkness, Psychological Consultant in the Greenville Office, received the SSA Associate Commissioner Citation for superior performance as a psychological consultant in achieving agency goals and enhancing the workplace environment and lives of others.

Dr. Ed Waller, Columbia Regional Office Lead Psychologist, received the Quarterly Anti-Fraud Award in recognition of superior performance and dedication in identifying, detecting and reporting fraudulent activity in the

SSA Disability Program.

Did you know...

...that SCVRD's safety program has helped the agency register much lower injury rates for our staff and training center clients than national comparisons for similar work settings? Thanks to all for keeping safety at the forefront!



Events

Anderson

- November 1 **Open House/Disability Mentoring Day.**
For more information, call 866-313-0082

Conway

- November. **Sams Club Tour.** Students who have graduated from high school in Georgetown and are seeking employment opportunities will tour Sams Club and meet with store managers.
 - First week in November. Long Horn Steak House will deliver a meal and make a food donation to our clients in JRT.
- For more information, call 843-546-2595

Lexington

- Each Tuesday in November. **Work Ready Workshops.**
For more information, call 866-206-5184

Rock Hill

- 11-15 **Job Fair** for Supported Employment
For more information, call 803-327-7106

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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